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VULCAN VENTURE (Konami)



In 1985 came *Nemesis*, Konami's mould-breaking horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up which pioneered progressive weaponry and features some absolutely stunning graphics and sound. A year later *Salamander* arrived on the scene, boasting a dual player option, alternate horizontally and vertically scrolling levels, and a more impressive armoury.

Now comes *Vulcan Venture*, the third in the *Nemesis* series. The player's ship is the same as the one that appeared in *Nemesis*, but features four different progressive armouries, one of which is chosen at the start. The default armoury is identical to *Nemesis*, whereas the other three contain such delights as ripple lasers, photon torpedoes, pulse lasers and tail guns. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages – it's up to the player to choose one to suit his own playing style.

When the weapons system is selected, play begins. First of all the obligatory retarded aliens float their way towards the ship in convenient lines – just ripe for blasting. Start collecting the pods they leave behind, and you can save up for some bigger and better weapons.



Progress a little further and the screen scrolls vertically as well as horizontally – to allow the ship to negotiate the huge, flaming suns it encounters. Long, fiery serpents wriggle spectacularly from the glowing heavenly bodies and pursue the Vulcan, spitting great gobs of glowing

gunge. This is where the extra weaponry proves essential as you blast the giant space-worms in the head before they trap the Vulcan with their tails.

It's pretty tough going through the first level, and to cap it all there's a huge laser-spitting Phoenix at the end, who won't

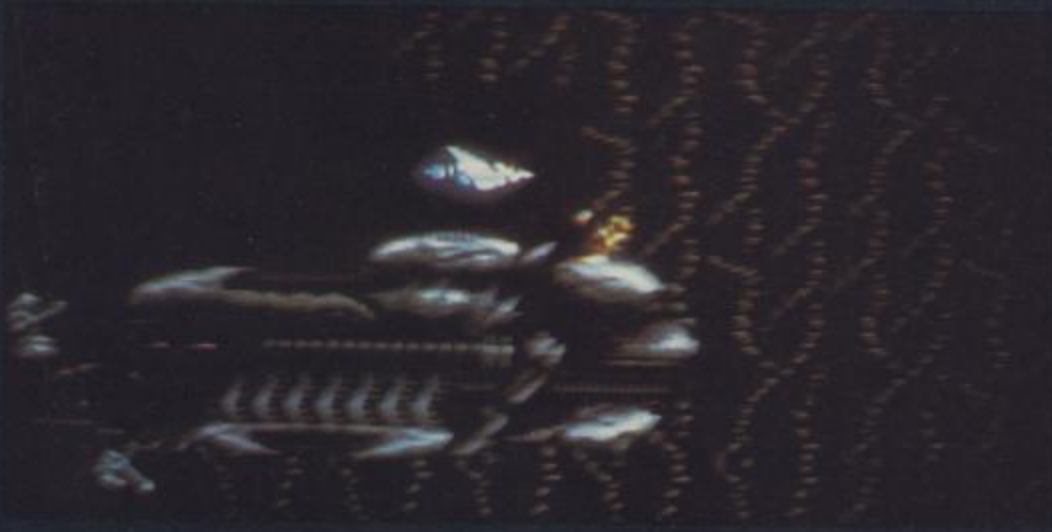
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let you pass on pain of death. The giant bird is beautifully animated.

The second level looks like something out of Hans Rudi Geiger's *Necronomicon*, with the ship blasting its way through a dense *Alien*-esque network of deadly webbing and organic growths. As well as clearing a route, the player also has additional worries in the form of uncomfortably accurate gun emplacements, rocket launchers and alien generators. Blast all the way through to the end of this level and a giant alien crustacean awaits to blast the Vulcan to kingdom come.

On later levels the Vulcan is guided through a storm of giant crystals and negotiates a tortuous, speedily scrolling



passageway, complete with opening and closing doors.

Vulcan Venture is a sensational blaster, and exhibits some incredible graphics and a thumping good soundtrack. The general presentation is superb, with an attract mode showing pictures of the two previous games, and there's also a very useful continue game option, which proves vital for players unfamiliar with the game. The playability is superb, and although hardened *Nemesis* players shouldn't have too many problems mastering the game, the average gamer should find it challenging and very addictive.

We wait for *Nemesis IV* with baited breath...

VIGILANTE (Irem)

Data East's ageing but fertile *Kung-Fu Master* format has spawned many clones, and Irem's latest, *Vigilante* is another addition to that great big happy horizontally scrolling kung-fu family.

The lovely Madonna has been abducted by a gang of tab-smoking, beer-drinking thugs and Mr Vigilante 'must take the law into his own hands' (oo-er) and go to her

rescue. The player takes control of the vigilante in question – a real 'ard geezer (you know he's 'ard because he's wearing Ninja espadrilles) and sets off down the street to rescue the luscious one. Naturally the street is a-teeming with thugs, who just happened to have got wind of Vigilante's plan, and they're out to stop him. Skinheads with low foreheads rush in from either side of the screen, fists raised to do the vigilante. However, a quick flash of his espadrilles should send them from whence they came. The hero is also nifty with his fists, and gives any oncoming skin a bunch of fives he won't forget in a hurry.

As play progresses the vigilante comes up against thugs armed with nunchukkas, guns and Ninja stars. If these are dispatched, they drop their weapons which may be picked up by Mr Vigilante and



THE SKINHEADS HAVE TAKEN
MADONNA HOSTAGE.



TAKE THE LAW

used against others. At the end of each level is a super-thug who is confronted and beaten up before play progresses to the next level. Just to make things worse, the action is played against a constantly decreasing time limit, which adds plenty of pressure.

Even though *Vigilante* treads a well-worn path, it proves plenty of fumpin' 'n' fightin' entertainment, helped considerably by the excellent sound effects and neat graphical touches. *Vigilante* doesn't quite match the high standards of *Double Dragon*, but offers some very enjoyable video violence nonetheless.

COIN-OPS NOW

KAGEKI (Taito)

If you still haven't got tired of the one-on-one combat game format, here's an oddity that should be of interest. Although *Kageki* is another pretty straightforward addition to the genre, it has a novel approach in its strange cartoon-style graphics.

Kageki follows the story of an everyday oriental gang of bloated-headed ruffians who stumble across a horrid goody two-shoes of similar visage and decide to beat him up – one at a time. The player takes control of the nice guy, who proceeds to defend himself as the gang attack one by one.

The action is set in a typical downtown alleyway, with the gang members sitting around the two-screen scrolling arena. The first opponent to step up for a trouncing is a greasy spiv with a quiff, who immediately sets about the hero with fists and feet. The player fights back with his fists only – quite a departure from the



usual groin-removing and flying feet specials you can dish out in other fighting games. Yes, the clean-cut hero sets about the opponents in true boxing style, while the evil ones attempt every trick in the book to do him over.

Power bars at the bottom of the screen measure each fighter's strength, and it takes two or three knock-downs before an opponent finally departs to push up daisies. A defeated opponent is dropped down a convenient manhole by a scowling git in a yellow smoking jacket, and the next opponent steps into the ring. As the player progresses through the levels,

stranger and stranger characters are encountered, such as an acrobat, a surgeon (complete with white mask), greasy fatty, escaped convict and, finally, the boss himself – a hard case with chronic taste in clothing.

The graphics throughout are excellent, with the laughable characters sporting oversized heads and tiny legs. Each one is nicely animated, with some great comic touches, such as their changing expressions and look of surprise as they're socked in the mouth! *Kageki* isn't a brilliant game, but if you're a fighting fan try it out.

HAUNTED CASTLE (Konami)

Dear Katie,

My fiancé and I recently got married. As we were walking up the hill to our new house, an evil Vampire appeared from nowhere, laughed in my face and abducted my virgin bride. She's currently being held against her will in his castle. I would report this to the police, but since this is 15th Century China, they haven't been invented yet. Have you any advice? **Worried Samurai, The Far East**

These certainly aren't the usual marital problems I deal with! If I was you I'd put on my best battle gear, arm myself with a



whip and set out to her rescue – and don't take any nonsense from the fella with the fangs.

KB

Well, what more can yer average Ninja-in-the-street do when his beloved is nicked by a blood-sucking fiend from beyond the grave?

The rescue attempt involves the hero negotiating the horizontally scrolling landscape in true *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* style. The first port of call is a graveyard, where rattling skeletons descend upon the Samurai and bash him with their bony

hands and feet, each hit reducing his energy bar. This is where the whip comes into play – one lash and the skeletons crumble to bones. Sometimes they drop glowing hearts, which are automatically picked up when run over. In times of stress, these are thrown at the enemy and explode like grenades, destroying all. As well as skeletons, zombies emerge from underground, rotting flesh flapping in the breeze, which again drop hearts when they're whipped.

It never rains but it pours says the old adage, and in *Haunted Castle* this is true. At the end of the first level the heavens open and the rain comes down like stair rods – it's certainly not the Samurai's day. Just to make things even worse, rocks from a nearby wall fly towards the hero, and unless they're whipped to dust quickly, they crush him to death. When all the bricks have flown, the sun once again emerges and the Samurai continues on his ramble.

As the player penetrates deeper into the Vampire's domain, fiery pits, Medusa



and her minions, giant trolls and the Vampire himself make the rescue attempt even harder. Extra weapons are available – a torch, dynamite, timer, boomerang and a crucifix – to help the hero on his way.

Haunted Castle offers the same old *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* type stuff, but in a different package. It's by no means a bad game, but once you've had a couple of goes you get those seen-it-all-before blues. Despite some great touches, like the pouring rain, complete with digitised rainstorm effect and pretty graphics, there's nothing to distinguish it from the rest of the genre.

NINJA WARRIORS (Taito)

A new set of conversion boards have just been developed by Taito especially to work with their unique three-screen monitor, previously used for the rather bland dual player horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up, *Darius*. Taito claim that *Ninja Warriors* incorporates the best ideas from three-year's-worth of coin-ops. To

the rest of us it looks like a pretty neat two-player martial arts game.

Each player takes control of a well-hard bionic Ninja (the deluxe version with go-faster stripes and nodding dog) and proceeds to stroll along a horizontally scrolling landscape. Both Ninjas are armed with Shuriken stars (for chucking at oncoming hostiles), and swift 'n' nifty knives for dishing out a quick apré mortem to those who dare get in their way.

Neither of these are hard men without a cause, and the two are off to defeat an evil dictator and his entire army to restore peace to the land. A difficult task? Not on your Nellie – it's all in a day's work for yer akshual bionic Ninja.

The action starts in a dismal-looking suburb. Within seconds enemy soldiers attack, firing guns, launching mortars and grenades, flinging knives and indulging in a little kung-fu when they get near enough. Robots also attack, and need several hits with knife and star before they become scrap metal. As the end of a level appears, tanks, gun emplacements, fire-breathing warrior types (which look a bit out of place) and droves of very annoyed soldiers. Each player has an energy bar, which is depleted as hits strike home. There's a useful continue option which



COIN-OPS NOW

allows you to carry on from where you

BLASTEROIDS (Atari)

Atari Games have looked to the past for their latest batch of games, the first of which is *Blasteroids*, a souped-up version of the 1979 vector graphic classic, *Asteroids*.

The general objective is still the same – to enter and clear a series of asteroid fields – but there are many new twists and extra features. For a start, the action can be played in single or dual player modes, with each player's ship capable of transforming into one of three different sizes. The largest gives extra firepower, medium gives extra armament and the

left off.

The three screens means that there's plenty of room to manoeuvre, and the game is nicely balanced so that solo warriors can progress with relative ease. The graphics are of near photographic quality, with incredibly detailed and beautifully drawn backdrops and superbly ani-

mated sprites, and the sound is befitting the action.

After the rather tepid *Denarius*, Taito have certainly turned up trumps with their three-screen arcade machine. It's far superior to *Double Dragon* in both looks and playability, and is surely the best combat game yet seen.

smallest is the most manoeuvrable. There's also an added option during the two player mode of joining the ships together, with player one controlling a large, but highly manoeuvrable ship and player two taking control of a rotating laser turret on top of the craft.

Each ship has a limited supply of energy which is depleted whenever the ship collides with an asteroid. Some asteroids release energy crystals when blown apart, which are flown into to replenish lost energy.

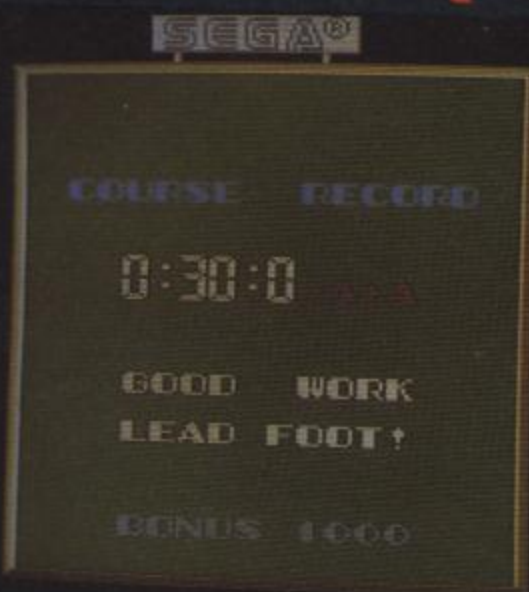
The action is set across four galaxies of increasing difficulty, with each galaxy split into fifteen different fields. As well as rocks, each asteroid field contains a variety of hazards to blast or avoid. Hom-

ing asteroids provide great problems, and 'Popcorn' asteroids expand and form stationary obstacles when hit. There are also alien ships – some heavily armoured – which yield extra weapons when blasted. These are automatically picked up and added to the ship's armoury when run over, and include extra shielding, firepower and energy capability, and cloaking devices.

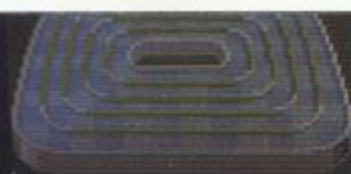
Blasteroids' graphics are outstanding, with the original vector graphics being replaced by some very smart digitised backdrops and sprites – the spinning rocks are truly stunning! There's also an incredible array of atmospheric sound effects and music, which are surely the best ever heard in an arcade game! To cap it all, the game plays extremely well, with just the right amount of difficulty to sustain a challenge. *Blasteroids* is a thoroughly enjoyable blast which shouldn't be missed.

COUNTER-RUN (Sega/Nihon)

The latest blast from the past to be exhumed, dusted down and tarted up with some decent graphics and sound is Sega's *Counter Run*, a particularly flaccid version of the ten-year-old arcade carbunkle, *Head-On*. Konami's *Fast Lane* is also a version of this ancient video, but has many improvements over the original, including extra weaponry and new twists in the gameplay. Sega's version is, quite surprisingly, a very straightforward no-frills rehash with very little improvement on the gameplay. The player takes control of a car and drives around a maze collecting fruit while changing lanes to avoid oncoming rival cars.



A turbo boost option is available and cups can be collected to stop other cars and give the score an extra boost, and later levels boast some whacky maze layouts, but unfortunately there's just not enough variety or addiction to hold interest for more than a couple of goes – it's just too repetitive. To put no finer point on it, *Counter Run* is rubbish, and a very surprising release from Sega, whose pedigree includes such greats as *Afterburner*, *Out Run* and *Alien Syndrome*.



CHOOSE

COURSE

NOVICE RUN



EXPERT RUN



CHELNOV (Data East)

Subtitled 'Atomic Runner', *Chelnov* is an enjoyable horizontally scrolling action game in which the Atomic Runner in question sprints through a series of weird caverns and across strange landscapes in an attempt to reach the Statue of Liberty in New York.

Large mother monsters make an appearance and traps open up as the Runner progresses through the levels. Extra weaponry is picked up by blasting objects hanging from the ceiling and collecting the pods they yield. Advanced armoury



includes super blasters, speed-ups, boomerangs, giant spinning discs and giant ring of stars. At the end of each stage a giant guardian is destroyed before a map appears indicating how far there still is to go.

Chelnov is a good game in that it's not



too difficult and doesn't require perfect hand/eye co-ordination; enemies can be bounced on and the collectable weapons are powerful enough to get you far into the game on one credit, making for good progressive play. It doesn't look terribly impressive at first, but in play it has those addictive qualities and not-too-complex

control which always makes for an enjoyable game. The graphics improve tremendously the further you progress, and there are some tremendous end-of-level guardians, including a giant fire-spitting serpent. Keep your eyes peeled for *Chelnov*, and make sure you've got a pocket full of ten pences at the ready.



COIN-OPS NOW

It's instantly apparent that *Super Ranger* is a *Rolling Thunder* variant – not only is the graphical style very similar, but the animation on the heroes and hostiles is identical and they also follow similar attack patterns. Having said that, *Super Ranger* does have several improvements over *Rolling Thunder*, including a dual-player option.

Each player takes control of a Super Ranger, a well-tough soldier of fortune who wears a whacky tracksuit, and who has to penetrate deep behind enemy lines in order to destroy an evil despot, a task which involves negotiating a hazardous horizontally scrolling landscape packed with hostile troops. Both rangers are armed with machine guns, and also have a limited number of grenades to bung at the enemy, and they can also make use of objects they are occasionally found on the floor.

The action is very reminiscent of *Rolling Thunder*, with similar two-level platform-type action. The going is pretty tough, and a two-rangers partnership is almost essential to the completion of some of the later screens. *Super Ranger* is a fairly mediocre offering, but isn't the sort of thing that'll keep you playing for long.

SUPER RANGER (Suna)



NEWS

A new development on the arcade front is *Krusha* – it isn't a coin-op, but a very silly and very, very sick bash-em-up cabinet game. The player wields up a hefty 'mallet' and tries to ever-so politely and with great dignity bash the brains out of plastic moles that pop up from holes in the cabinet, and the more you bash, the faster those cheeky little rogues poke their cute little heads out of the holes. The going gets pretty frenetic, and is thoroughly enjoyable!

Another sick game making its way into the arcades is Bally's *Blasted*, an *Operation Wolf*-type game set in a city ravaged by revolting robots. Speaking of which, Taito are currently tracking down illegal copies of *Operation Wolf* – they're virtually identical, but are called *Operation Bear*. If you see one, don't play it!

Konami's new race game is called *Chequered Flag*, and should be appearing in arcades very soon, and the latest video from Atari is *Vindicators*, a one or two-players tank game designed to fit inside a *Xybots* arcade console.

Capcom has *Last Duel* also poised for cabinet space, along with several other titles for 1988 and 1989 – to which US Gold already have the rights! The highly successful beat 'em ups *Double Dragon* and *Gryzor* are both to appear on the Nintendo Play-Choice 10, and finally, Sega has *Ace Attacker* and *Hot Rod* in the pipeline for Europe and the UK. The latter title is a car racing game which is apparently an *Out Run* beater!

SUPER SELECT SYSTEM (Arcadia)

Arcadia (Mastertronic's arcade subsidiary) are a new force in the coin-op world, and their *Super Select System* is in direct competition with Nintendo's *Playchoice 10*. It's a multiplay arcade machine based around the Amiga B52 board system and

comes in two formats: Sports Simulation and Arcade Action. Each one boasts five different games – some new, and others which might just be recognised by Spectrum owners...

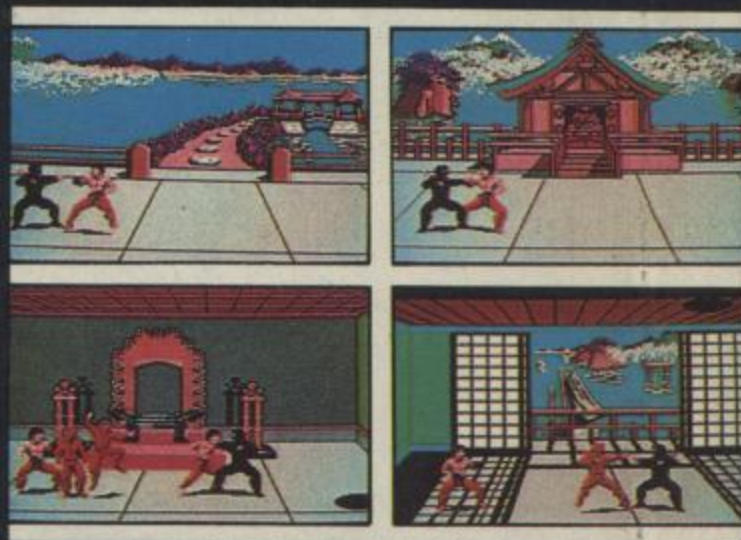
ARCADE ACTION

The *Arcade Action* set-up offers five games, ranging from a traditional beat 'em up to an unusual future sport concept.

Ninja Mission is a conversion of the similarly named Spectrum beat 'em up/arcade adventure. The player takes control of a Ninja hero and enters the evil Akuma's palace to retrieve seven stolen jade idols, a task which involves battling gangs of marauding guards.

The graphics are excellent, with lovely character animation and some neat backdrops. It shouldn't take beat 'em up experts too long to complete the mission, but it proves highly enjoyable nonetheless.

Blasta Ball is based on the mildly addictive Spectrum game, *Hyperbowl*. The



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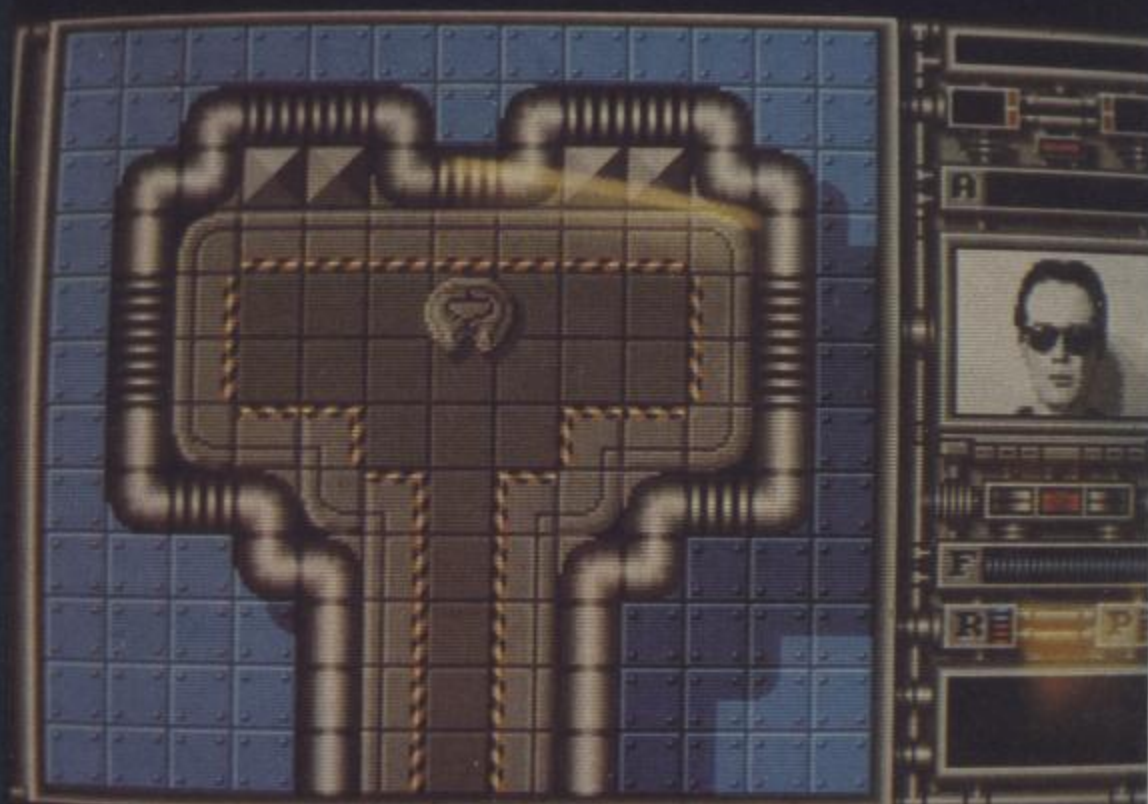
scrolling action is viewed from above and involves taking control of a ship and driving a large moving puck into the opponents' goal. The concept is very simple, and unfortunately doesn't hit the mark as an arcade game. The graphics are colourful, but the gameplay just isn't addictive enough to spend more than a few ten pences on.

For shoot 'em up fans there's *Xenon*, a vertically scrolling 'progressive' blaster in which a craft capable of changing from tank to aircraft is guided through 16 sectors of frenetic action. As the mission progresses, extra weapons are collected to create a very impressive armoury. Each sector has its own particular guardian which is destroyed to progress to the next, and none give up without a fight!

The action is fast and furious and the graphics are really spectacular – especially some of the large aliens. *Xenon* is a very enjoyable and extremely addictive shoot 'em up and is well worth checking out.

Sidewinder is a straightforward vertically scrolling shoot 'em up. There are no extra weapons to worry about – you just blast everything in sight. There's plenty of noisy action, and it proves very enjoyable, and is a lot easier than *Xenon*!

Lastly there's *Space Ranger* a colourful horizontally scrolling blaster. Again, the gameplay is simple and should please those with itchy trigger fingers.



SPORTS SIMULATION

Like the *Arcade Action* package, *Sport Simulation* offers a wide variety of games, most of which have been converted from the home computer format.

One of the most notable conversions is *Arcade Leaderboard*, a slightly tweaked version of the classic golfing game which manages to retain all of the original's playability. The course is played against a time limit, and trees, bunkers, rivers and lakes make the going extremely tough. There are extra features too, including sampled voices, an animated instruction screen and map of the course. It's certainly an unusual and very entertaining arcade game – go for a round.

The highly successful budget darts game, *180*, has been given the arcade treatment and renamed *World Darts*. The gameplay is virtually identical to the computer game, and the player challenges a series of increasingly adept computer opponents at a match of 501. The graphics and sound are both superb, and the gameplay has a lovely 'feel'. *World Darts* isn't the sort of game you'd expect to find in an arcade, but it's surprisingly addictive and well worth trying out.

SportTime Bowling is a very weak bowling simulation based on *Strike*, MAD's budget game. It doesn't play well and lacks the believable pinfall necessary to capture the thrills of bowling. Even the graphics and sound are poor! Not one to break open a piggy bank for...

Offering more in the playability stakes, but still suffering from weak graphics is

SportTime Table Hockey, a simulation of the one-on-one air hockey games often found in seaside arcades. The fast action is enjoyable at first, but it doesn't take

long to lose its appeal.

Pool is a difficult game to convert to a video format, but Arcadia have managed to capture the game's spirit with *Pool*. The ball movements are very realistic, giving the game good playability. *Pool* is definitely one of the best games of its type, and should be checked out.

Arcadia are also planning *Basketball*, *Football* and *Tennis* simulations especially for the *Super Select System*.



COIN-OPS NOW

AAARGH (Arcadia)

One of Arcadia's new dedicated games is *Aaargh*, a mashing, smashing monster game in which one or two players assume the role of a pair of terrible monsters; Godzilla and a giant Cyclops go on the rampage through a series of towns and cities. The action is displayed in 3D, with the monsters able to walk 'in' and 'out' of the screen.

The first port of call is a tribal village, and the gruesome twosome stride around the village, smashing down houses and setting them alight. As buildings are wrecked, the inhabitants stream out and are either stomped to death, or picked up and eaten – very enjoyable!

Beneath one of the houses is an egg, which is revealed only when the building is razed to the ground. If the egg is picked up, both players get the chance to increase their score in a bonus stage. The



monsters face one another and fight – the winner claiming the egg and a large points bonus. After this violent interlude, both creatures return to stomp and smash the next location. Later stages include Egypt, the Wild Frontier, China and a Greek temple.

The destructive gameplay is straightforward, but extremely absorbing, and the highly detailed graphics and superb sound effects enhance the action immensely. *Aaargh* is one of the best arcade releases in months, and is well worth hunting down.

ROAD WARS (Arcadia)

Road Wars is Arcadia's one-on-one 3D shoot 'em up which should be familiar to Spectrum owners. One or two players drive 'battlespheres' – futuristic spherical tanks – up an infinitely long road and destroy oncoming hazards. The vehicles have two modes of operation: 'open' for

blasting attackers, and 'closed' for smashing through obstacles unscathed.

The action is very simplistic, and there's little to do other than dodge or blast approaching objects. There's little in the way of an ultimate objective, and it doesn't take long for it to lose its appeal.



EXZISUS (Konami)

Konami's recent shoot 'em up is very much in the *Side Arms* mould, but takes 'progressive' weaponry a few steps further. The player guides a jet-packed soldier across a hostile landscape and blasts all and sundry. Up to 27 extra weapons are picked up by shooting alien pods and collecting the letters therein, and a fully-armed soldier is an awesome sight.

Although *Exzissus* is a very straightforward no-frills blaster, it's extremely playable and keeps you feeling for loose change.



ROCKFORD (Arcadia)

Rockford is the arcade version of the evergreen classic *Boulderdash*, and was programmed in the States by First Star software.

There are 40 levels set across ten different worlds, each having its own 'theme', with the dirt, boulders, diamonds, and even Rockford himself taking on a differ-

ent appearance in each.

Both the graphics and sound are very disappointing, and the gameplay is very tough, requiring a very high degree of skill and an understanding of the game's workings. *Boulderdash* fans will doubtless find *Rockford* fun to play, but those unfamiliar with the computer version may find the action much too tough and unrewarding to be worth persevering with. Try it – you'll either love it or hate it.



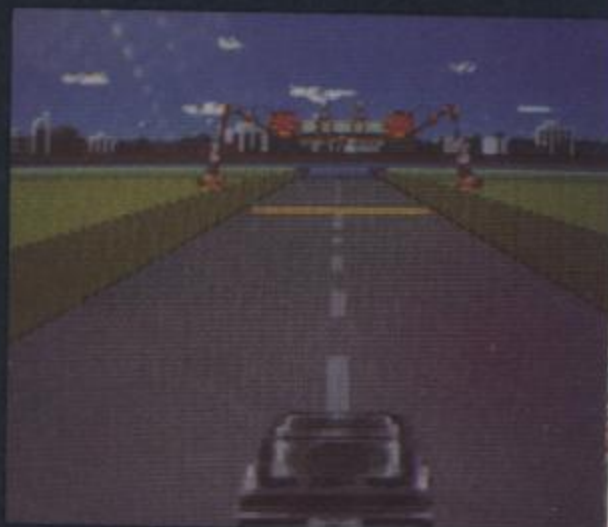
HYPER CRASH

(Konami)

Although Konami's racing destruction game, *Hyper Crash* looks totally awful, it's enjoyable to play. The objective is to race around five hazard-filled courses within

the allotted time limit. Opponents are disposed of by bumping them as hard as possible into the track walls or an oncoming obstacle. The car is also capable of some-rsaulting if top speed is reached, and enemy cars are squashed with a well-aimed flip.

The graphics are very blocky and look incredibly primitive when compared with the likes of *WEC Le Mans* and *Out Run*, but the destructive nature of the game-play makes it great fun. It's a little on the easy side, and shouldn't take too long to complete, but *Hyper Crash* is entertaining and worth feeding a little loose change into.



STREET FIGHTER

(Capcom)

Capcom's latest is a traditional one or two-player beat 'em up played across a series of backdrops, very much in the *Karate Champ* mould. However, it adds a new dimension with pneumatic 'punch buttons', large rubber pads that are bashed to make the on-screen fighter

punch out – and the harder they're thumped, the more powerful the hit.

The action is certainly gratifying, with great feedback from the buttons, but once the novelty of hitting the machine wears off (something most people do anyway), there's very little in the gameplay to draw you back.

There's a newer version of *Street Fighter* with normal arcade buttons which allow the player to fight more skillfully. Again, its simplicity is its downfall, and once you've beaten a few opponents, the addiction wears thin.

DEVIL WORLD

(Konami)

Gauntlet has spawned many clones, but Konami's *Devil World* takes the genre a few steps further. It's a one or two-player game in which a hero and heroine explore a lost world filled with monsters, hazards and traps.

The action is displayed from a forced perspective viewpoint, and each player travels the landscape picking up items of treasure and shooting attackers. When an object is picked up, one of the icons at the bottom of the screen becomes highlighted, and is selected to give the player extra weapons, including a shotgun, bazooka and laser rifle.

As the action progresses, the landscape and attackers become increasingly ferocious, and later stages require the players to cross perilous bridges, make a stand against marauding hordes of violent reptilians and tackle a giant mud monster. The going is certainly tough, but with the extra weaponry it's possible to blast all and sundry – a great feeling.

Devil World is easy to get into, and the violent blasting action is very satisfying indeed.



FAST LANE

(Konami)

Remember an old black and white game called *Head On*? It first appeared in 1978 and required the player to guide a stick car around a very simple maze and pick up dots while avoiding oncoming cars. Now Konami have taken the idea, added some snazzy graphics and wonderful sampled music and come up with *Fast Lane*.

In the new version, the stick car has become a Ferrari, the oncoming vehicle is a kamikaze off-road buggy, and the dots

are girls who run around the maze and are 'picked up' when run into. The maze layout varies from screen to screen, and as play progresses, glowing orbs appear and are collected to add a feature to the Ferrari – such as firepower, extra speed or bombs – which are used to despatch the opposing car.

Fast Lane is a very appealing game – far better than Sega's awful *Counter Run* – and is worth trying out.



COIN-OPS NOW

BLACK TIGER (Capcom)

Black Tiger is yet another version of the much-cloned *Ghosts 'n' Goblins*. The player takes the role of fighter Black Tiger and travels across a hazard-filled land-



scape in search of fame and fortune. Every step of the way is fraught with danger, and vile creatures attack constantly. Pots are encountered along the way and are broken to reveal extra points or weapons to help Black progress further.

Black Tiger is tough and challenging, but hasn't anything new to offer. Try it out if you're a *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* fan...

PAC-MANIA (Atari)

After a string of adventures in *Pac-Man*, *Ms Pac-Man*, *Pac-Man Jr* and *Pacland*, that yellow creature with an insatiable appetite is back! *Pac-Mania* is very much in essence of the first *Pac-Man* game, but Atari Games have added some new ideas to keep Pac-fans on their toes.

There are three levels of entry (plus a final level), one of which the player chooses before starting. The action is displayed in isometric perspective 3D, with

only a small portion of the scrolling maze shown at any one time. Pac-Man's objective is, as always, to clear the maze of dots and avoid the deadly clutches of the five marauding ghosts. To help Pac-Man along, there are power pills which give him the ability to destroy ghosts and send them back to their pen, although the effects are only temporary. Fruits also appear and are run into for bonus points, and sweets are eaten to increase speed or



double points.

A new twist comes with Pac-Man's ability to bounce – a press of the fire button sends him leaping into the air over approaching ghosts. However, on later levels there's a ghost who also has the ability to bounce!

Pac-Mania has some really neat graphics – very bright and bold – and there's a great upbeat soundtrack to urge you on. Each level has a different theme, including Block Town, Pac-Man's Park, Sandbox Land and Jungly Steps, and some of the more advanced mazes are huge! Clearing later levels requires a great deal of skill and a good memory to remember where those last few dots are!

With the addition of new intermission screens, *Pac-Mania* provides plenty of fun for Pac-Man fans, and should definitely be tried.

SHINOBI (Sega)

A further addition to the long snaking queue of Ninja combat games comes in the shape of Sega's *Shinobi*. A number of terribly cute children have been kidnapped by a group of despicable overlords, (the Japanese seem to have some sort of

kidnapping fixation) and it's the player's task to rescue the poor little mites who are to be found tied up throughout the push-scroll landscapes.

The main character – Musashi, master of Ninjutsu – jumps and kicks his way

through each levelful of baddies. The mode of combat alters to suit the situation, allowing Musashi to engage in hand-to-hand combat with enemies in close quarters, and automatically use his Shuriken star-throwing abilities on those at a distance. Ninja magic can be used once per level, (effectively a Ninja smart bomb), and saving all the hostages on a level is rewarded by a variety of extra weapons.

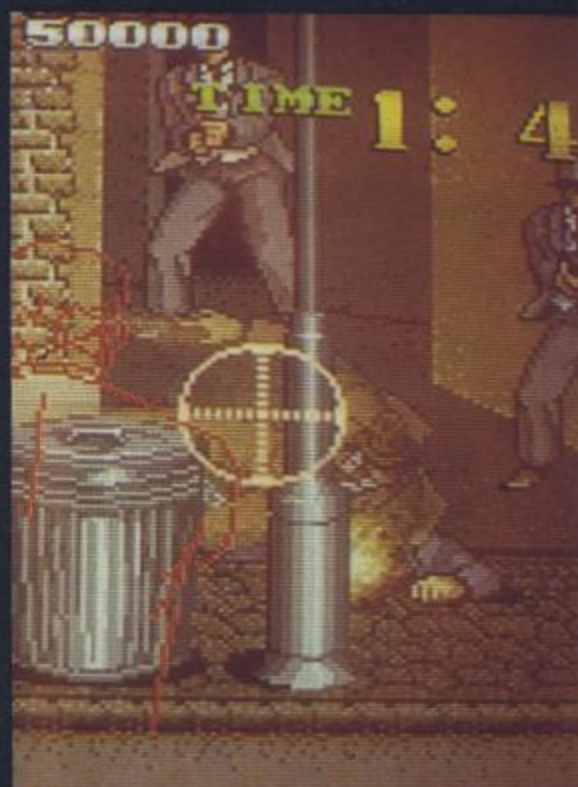
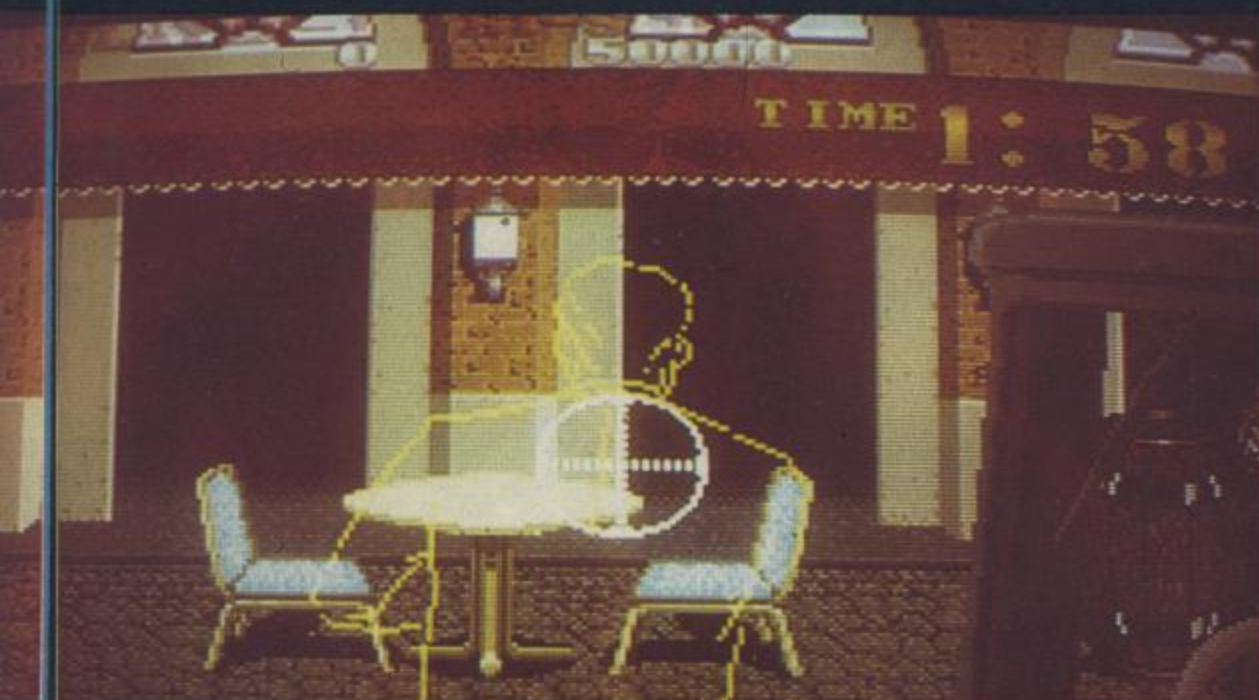
On reaching the end of each stage, the 'big boss' appears. His defeat secures entrance to a bonus screen where, using a first-person perspective display, Musashi is directed in defending himself against the onslaught of oriental assassins. Musashi kills all his assailants by precise throwing of Shuriken stars. His opponents constantly close in, leaping from platform to platform; should they get too near, Musashi is defeated and the next stage begins. However, extra lives are awarded for the elimination of all foe.

Shinobi contains five missions, of three to four levels in length, and a map is displayed at the start of each level to show what lies ahead.

Sporting some bold backdrops and large sprites, *Shinobi* is very reminiscent of an oriental *Rolling Thunder*, with bonus stages thrown in for good measure. The action is reasonably attractive, (although the sound effects are seriously lacking) but there's no real lure except for patrons of all the other beat 'em ups on offer recently.



DEAD ANGLE (Seibu)



An unusual coin-op, *Dead Angle* could easily have been converted from Infogrames' home micro game, *Prohibition*, being a cross between *Empire City 1931* and a period *Operation Wolf*. Set in America during the Roaring Twenties, the game follows the player's efforts in rescuing his beloved girlfriend who has been kidnapped by a gang of hoodlums (original scenarios are few and far between these days). Deciding to fight fire with fire, the player embarks on a mission where pump-actions speak louder than words.

A free-floating gunsight is positioned around the screen as you blast your way through the streets which are lined with members of the gang. A limited number of grenades is also at your disposal for the mass destruction of opposition.

The landscape is horizontally and vertically parallax push-scrolled along, and provides a variety of objects behind which the player can hide from return gunfire. Each level has to be secured within a time limit and failure is presented in a smart, bloody red-out.

The atmosphere generated is suitably tense, but on the whole *Dead Angle* is a fairly tepid affair; not one to lose much cash over.

RABBIT PUNCH (Taito)

Also released as *Rabio Lepus* under the auspices of V-Systems, Taito's *Rabbit Punch* is a sort of *Side Arms* meets *Water-ship Down*. One or two robot rabbits set out on a horizontally scrolling mission of tension, excitement and large orange vegetables in an attempt to save two young bunny-girls in bondage and an old man called King (suspiciously dressed in a

rabbit costume, and similarly tied up) who have been kidnapped and secreted individually in each of the game's three sections. The mission begins on board a large spaceship, progressing via an asteroid base to reach its conclusion on the surface of the target planet itself.

The robo-bunnies are equipped with a supplies of bullets and smart bombs which are replenished along the way by shooting tins of carrots and collecting the vegetables thus revealed.

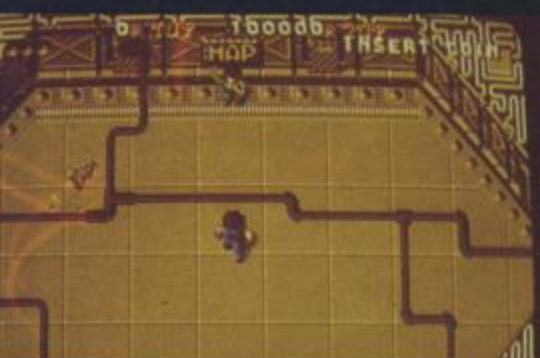
Both cute rabbits fly, and can walk

along the ground in a beautifully animated sequence. There are some odd parts to the game: sampled speech tells you that 'red nipples are instant' (well, that's what it sounds like to us), and that you should 'destroy enemy Mazda' — an evil beast which looks not entirely unlike a robotic donkey! Once this devil incarnate and his minions have been despatched, a carrot bonus screen appears where both players collect as many falling carrots as possible, before one touches the ground, ending that round.

The game sports some smart graphics and is an unusual, but humorous and playable game which should have you piling in the ten pees — for a while at least.

COIN-OPS NOW

ALIEN SYNDROME (Sega)



Blast and collect as quickly as possible – if you manage to finish a level before the timer reaches 100, a 60,000 points bonus is awarded.

ROLLING THUNDER (Atari)

To get hundreds of bullets, just enter the door marked with a bullet, emerge and walk a few screens right, turn around and go back to the door and you're able to enter again and collect more bullets! Keep on doing this until you've had enough...



don't touch a thing. When the ship is destroyed, the second one appears with a full complement of wings and homing missiles – ready to inflict some real damage. By the way, watch out because the ship moves a little on the slow side, so pick up some speedups as soon as possible.

GRYZOR (Taito)

The best weapon to choose is the spray shot – not only is it useful for blasting away the enemy, it's also the best one for defeating the end-of-game giant.

720° (Atari)

Top players recommend a combination of three helmets, three shoes, one pad and one board for attaining top scores on this noisy and rather difficult skateboarding game.

HANG-ON (Sega)

This one's a bit of a myth, but you might like to try it to see if you can get it to work. If you play the giant sit-on version, you get an extra points bonus for completing a track without touching down. This seems a little silly because so much time is lost in doing so...

CRYSTAL CASTLES (Atari)

The three warps are pretty well known. The first is on screen one (Level 1/1) – go behind the building, stand on the back left corner of the maze and press fire to gain 140,000 points and warp to level three (Level 3/1), where the next warp appears. To activate this you must wear the hat, run down to the middle of the hidden ramp and jump. It's the most difficult of the three warps, and requires precise timing and quick movement to execute the warp before the hat runs out. A successful warp leads to Level 5/1 and also increases the score to 280,000. The final warp is found on Level 5/3, and is very similar to the first. Just guide Bentley bear to the top left hand corner of the maze and press jump to warp to Level 7/1. Complete another five screens to set up a warp to Level 8/1 – when you start a new game just enter the door that appears in the wall of Level 1/1 and press fire to warp to Level 8/1 with a 490,000 points bonus.

This is a really neat trick: jump more than 128 times on the front corner of the first screen (where Bentley starts) to get a surprise on the next screen – don't warp, though!

If you're a very advanced *Crystal Castles* player and want to be a complete bar steward, ask a chum to play doubles. Go first, and keep playing until you finish the game. When your friend takes his turn, he won't be able to finish the screen he's on

GAUNTLET I/II (Atari)

To get the most out of Death, shoot him eight times before zapping him with a potion. The order of points are 1000, 2000, 1000, 4000, 1000, 6000, 1000, 8000. By the way, you only need to shoot one Death eight times to increase the points for every other Death on that screen.

OUT RUN (Sega)

According to top players, the fastest run takes you through *Devil's Canyon*, left to *Snowy Alps*, right to *Wheatfield* and right again to *Autobahn*. Practise these to maximise your top score.

SLAP FIGHT (Taito)

Here's a quick tip for those who are fed up of having to collect the stars. Insert coin, press start and leave the machine alone –

— even when all the diamonds have been collected! Two things happen here: either the bees come down and claim all his lives, or the bees don't appear and he's left wandering around the maze ad infinitum — or until the machine is switched off.

GALAGA (Namco)

This tip works on any screen past Level 30. Shoot all but one alien. Let it fly past you ship 255 times. The next pass it makes it doesn't fire. Let it go past and shoot it as it comes down again. From the next attack wave onwards none of the aliens fire, allowing you to happily blast them into oblivion — just make sure you stay out of the way of kamikaze ones!

STAR WARS (Atari)

An ancient tip for those who still enjoy playing this blast from the past. You can increase scores tremendously by using the force on the third section, the Death Star run. Don't shoot anything except the exhaust port — and that means dodging everything the Empire throws at you — and a force bonus is added to your score. On the first level you get 5000 points, which increases to 100,000 on later levels.

Another tip is instigated with a great deal of difficulty and a lot of luck. If, on the tie-fighter dogfight stage, Darth Vader's ship is shot more than 30 times the player is given 27 extra shields. If you're amazingly lucky you can get 255 shields — but this is an incredibly rare occurrence.

RETURN OF THE JEDI (Atari)

A tip for *Return of the Jedi* experts is to reach level eight, enter the Death Star and destroy the reactor. On the way out, ram one of the supports to destroy the Millennium Falcon and the machine puts you back at the beginning of level eight. Keep on doing this with your remaining lives, and then finish the level on your last life to get a 100,000 bonus.

SUPER MARIO BROS (Nintendo)

Increase your score by following this neat move. On Level 3/2, jump the first turtle and follow it along at top speed, not letting it get off screen. As it zooms along it hits a long line of other creatures, netting a big points bonus and, on the last turtle, an extra life. Kill Mario as quickly as possible and repeat the move again, and again, and again...

BUBBLE BOBBLE (Taito)



Taito's *Bubble Bobble* is arguably one of the best platform arcade games to have appeared on the arcade scene. To help Bub and Bob, two friendly, bubble-blowing brontosaurus, rescue their girlfriends from Baron Von Bonner's clutches one, or preferably, two players negotiate all 100 levels of the Baron's dungeon, and defeat the bulbous overlord in brontosaurus-to-Bonner combat. In order to make your way a little easier — although not much — here are some general hints and tips on this perilous mission!



GENERAL HINTS: If possible, wait for all the bubbled baddies to group together before bursting them, since they yield higher fruit bonuses (not necessarily vital, but they boost score tremendously).

Clearing a screen quickly causes high point targets to appear on the next level.

Bursting blue water bubbles causes a stream of water to rush down the screen, sweeping any baddies along with it. The demised meanies are then turned into bonus diamonds which fall onto the uppermost platform from the top of the screen. Generally, the water flows in the direction you are facing.

Bursting green lightning bubbles causes a spark of lightning to whizz horizontally across the screen, killing all baddies in the way and turning them into diamonds. The spark always goes in the opposite direction you're facing. Be careful not to hit your partner, since contact with lightning immobilises him for vital seconds!

Bursting fire bubbles causes a small flame to fall onto the first surface it hits, leaving a pool of fire. Contact with this is fatal to meanies, who are, once again, killed and turned into diamonds.



BONUS OBJECTS

FRUIT: Exotic fruit give higher bonus points.

CANDY STICKS: When the last bubbled meanie is burst, all remaining bubbles turn into bonus items and a larger item drops down to be collected for additional score.

TREASURE CHEST: A similar effect to candy sticks.

CLOCK: Resets level timer and alters

screen colours.

WATCH: Freezes meanies allowing them to be easily bubbled while stationary.

ORANGE BUBBLEGUM: Bubble Up! — increases bubble firing speed.

PURPLE BUBBLEGUM: Bubble Up! — make bubbles travel further.

CYAN BUBBLEGUM: Bubble Up! — increases speed of bubble travel.

RED TEAPOTS: Bubble Up! — gives full fire-power.

PURPLE TEAPOTS: Smart Bomb — kills all baddies and turns them into diamonds.

BLUE TEAPOTS: Gives extra points.

PURPLE BOMB: Smart Bomb — kills all baddies for diamond bonuses.

BLUE CRUCIFIX: Fills the screen with water, drowning all baddies and turning them into diamonds.

RED CRUCIFIX: Imparts the owner with the ability to fire fireballs.

YELLOW CRUCIFIX: Causes a large bolt of lightning to zap across the screen, killing all meanies on contact for a diamond bonus.

UMBRELLA: Advances play three screens.

YELLOW UMBRELLA: Advances play five screens.

PURPLE UMBRELLA: Advances play seven screens.

TRAINING SHOE: Speed up! — the owner moves around with increased speed.

NECKLACE: Releases a bouncing, glowing ball which kills all meanies on contact, turning them into bonus diamonds.

RED RING-PULL: Endows the owner with bonus points for movements left and right.

SILVER RING-PULL: Initiates a stream of stars which fall down the screen killing all meanies in the process for a diamond bonus.

SPELLBOOK: Smart Bomb — explodes, killing all meanies.

GLOWING HEARTS: Endow Bub and Bob with temporary indestructibility — meanies are killed on contact.

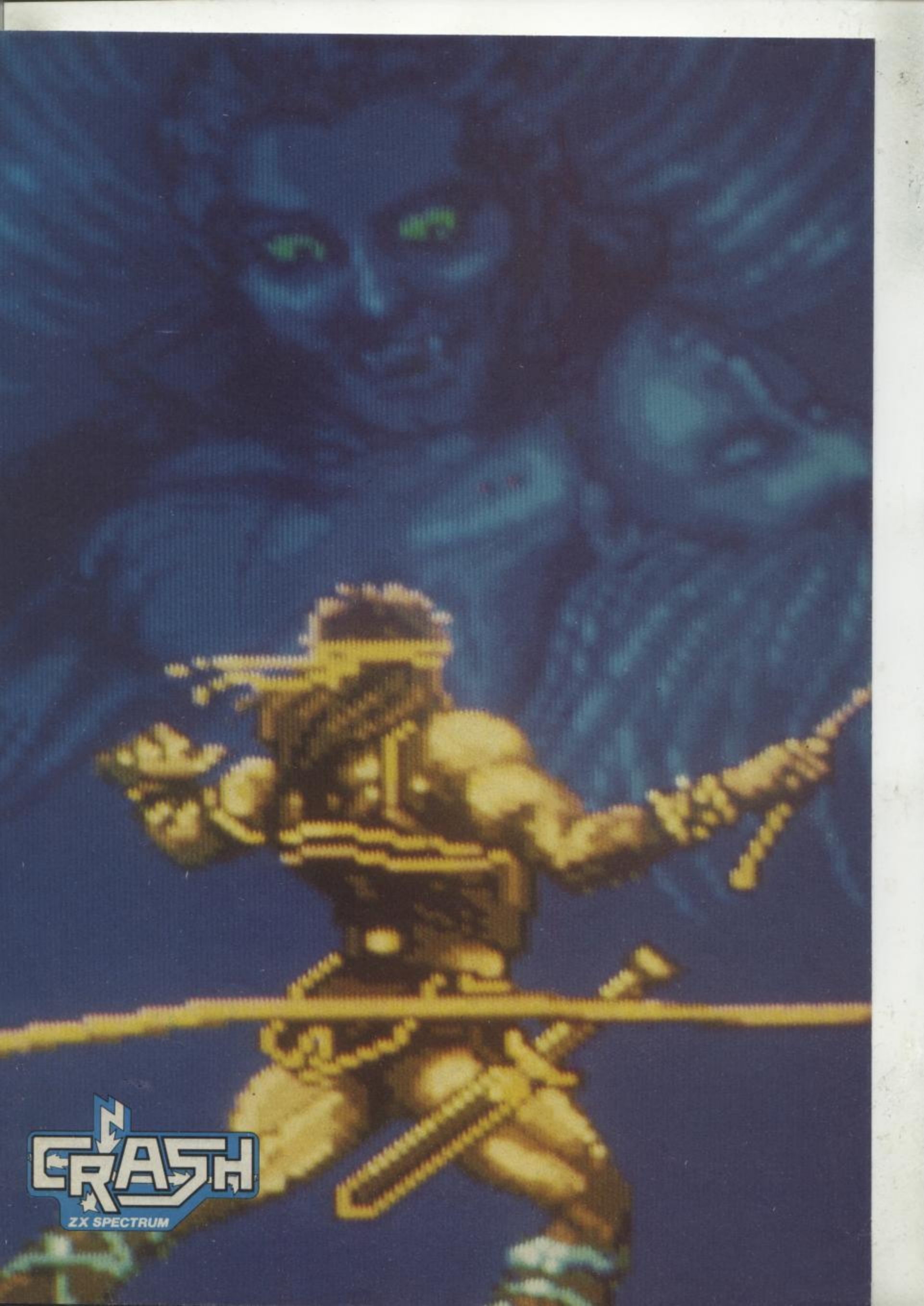
POTIONS: Fill the screen with unusual icons. Collect them all within the time limit for large Bonus. **HINT:** If both players collect equal numbers, they each receive a 100,000 bonus!

DOORWAY: Entrance to the hidden room, which contains an extremely large bonus in diamonds!



HINTS FOR SCREEN 100: The Baron's lair! Killing this huge floating felon is achieved by jumping up the small platforms to collect the green potion bottles at the top of the screen. This allows Bub and Bob to fire lightning bubbles which, when burst, make contact with the Baron. In order to fire as many sparks as possible, collect the potion bottle and fall down the nearest wall, facing outwards. Any bubbles blown are immediately burst and the resulting spark shoots across the screen to further the demise of the Baron, who constantly floats around the screen and must be avoided since contact with him spells instant death.

Only after 100 such hits does the Baron become bubbled, and the player who manages to head-butt the bully into oblivion is rewarded by a 1,000,000 point bonus, and the end-of-game screen...



CRASH
ZX SPECTRUM